

THE LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH CAROLINA



THE COLLECTION OF
NORTH CAROLINIANA

C378
UK3
1840B
Earringer

UNIVERSITY OF N.C. AT CHAPEL HILL



00036720904

**This book must not
be taken from the
Library building.**



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

AN ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ALUMNI AND GRADUATING CLASS

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF N. C.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 1840.

BY DANIEL M. BARRINGER, ESQ.

RALEIGH:

PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF THE RALEIGH STAR.

1840.



CORRESPONDENCE.

CHAPEL HILL, June 4, 1840.

SIR,

We have been appointed to tender you the thanks of the Dialectic Society, for your able Address before the Alumni and Graduating Class, on yesterday morning; and to request a copy of the same for publication.

Yours, with respect,

T. L. AVERY,
J. F. HOKE,
A. R. KELLY. } Committee.

To DANIEL M. BARRINGER, Esq.

UNIVERSITY OF N. C., }
June 4th, 1840. }

GENTLEMEN:

I have received this morning your note requesting, on behalf of the Dialectic Society, a copy of the Address delivered by me on yesterday morning before the Alumni and Graduating Class, with the expression of a desire that it may be published. I feel a sincere diffidence in yielding to the request of the Society: but if it be regarded as containing any valuable or useful suggestion, worthy of public consideration, the Society is at liberty to make such disposal of the Address as in its sound discretion it may think proper.

Permit me, gentlemen, through you to tender to the Society whose humble organ I have been, my grateful acknowledgments for the generous but undeserved partiality which it has manifested towards me: And please accept for yourselves my thanks for the polite and courteous manner in which you have expressed to me the wishes of your Society.

With assurance of my sincere esteem,

I am, gentlemen,

Your friend and ob't. serv't.

D. M. BARRINGER.

To THOMAS L. AVERY,
JOHN F. HOKE,
ANGUS R. KELLY. } Committee, &c.

A D D R E S S.

GENTLEMEN ALUMNI OF THE UNIVERSITY:

We are again assembled on this classic ground. How vivid and endearing are the reminiscencies of earlier life that crowd upon our memories! How gratefully joyous the greetings of friends, whom congenial pursuits had bound together amid these temples of science and learning, while we were yet strangers to a world whose corroding cares, sordid passions and empty vanities could not reach to destroy the affections we then so ardently cherished! We have met to renew and confirm these youthful friendships; to brighten and strengthen the links that enthralled our young hearts together. We have met here to enjoy the sweet reverie which springs from the hallowed associations of this sacred spot; to look once more on the venerable oaks, and linger once again in the consecrated groves, where the genial sun of science first illumined our mental vision; to recur to the thrilling incidents of a season

“When life itself was new,

“And the heart promised what the fancy drew”;

and to commune, in fond recollection, of the *gaudia certaminis*, not indeed of the debasing strifes of an envious rivalry, but of the generous struggles and lofty emulations of that intellectual warfare whose holy aim was to dignify the mind—ennoble the heart—and prepare us for the high purposes of our being. Here, too, the spirit of association will trace on the pages of memory the images of those who, pilgrims of different climes and countries, have been dispersed, by the vicissitudes of fortune, throughout the length and breadth of the earth—will repeat, with the pensive harmony of the songs of other days, the merry sounds of voices that have been hushed forever in the silence of the tomb. It will remind us of bright hopes that have been shrouded in the oblivion of an early grave, and the warm gushings of glad

hearts that have long ceased to palpitate forever. It will tell us, too, of others, who have opened the career of life, and, like meteors, have blazed for a while in the circles of their influence, and then disappeared forever; or, more unfortunate still, have sunk, by their own folly, weakness and inability to withstand the shocks and injuries of fortune, into the depths of an inglorious obscurity. It will remember us, again, of others, who have always kept their weapons bright—whose fortitude has been undismayed—whose integrity of purpose has prevailed against the temptations of life—who have pressed forward to the prize of their high calling, and “climbed the steep where fame’s proud temple shines afar”—thus realizing the fond expectations of early friends—banishing the trembling anxieties of parental solicitude—rewarding the untiring devotion of kind instructors—and fulfilling the just claims of their country’s need.

We are here also, gentlemen, in our annual pilgrimage to these shrines of literature, to bear testimony to the progressive prosperity of our beloved Alma Mater; and to give encouragement to the guardians of her welfare, not only to maintain the high character she has already acquired in the estimation of our common country, but to stimulate new exertions in her behalf, that she may be placed on a basis which shall not be shaken by the tides of false prejudice or unforeseen adversity: so that, for all time to come, she may continue to be a beacon-light from which shall be radiated throughout the whole limits of our wide-spread domain, the pure beams of knowledge and of truth.

We are here too, to look upon and cheer, by our presence, the ingenuous efforts of young minds that may hereafter soar with eagle’s wings into the loftiest regions of fancy and philosophy; and to witness the imposing and interesting ceremony of ushering upon the untried scenes of practical life, a class of youthful soldiers of learning, about to engage in the business and assume the responsibilities of manhood. And I hope, young gentlemen of the Senior Class, you will pardon here the expression of our gratification in a knowledge of the fact that yours is a class equally distinguished in the

7

annals of our Commencements, for the number and talent of its members.

The limit which marks the entrance of youth upon manhood, has been signalized in every nation by some conspicuous distinction, either of legal authority or voluntary celebration. The German youth of the age of Tacitus, upon its arrival, was solemnly presented with a shield and a spear, in the presence of the chiefs and the valiant of the land. The youthful Roman, in the open forum, surrounded by the assembled citizens, was invested with the robe of manhood. So, on this occasion, in accordance with a sentiment so natural, and in analogy to a custom so universal, we have assembled in the presence of the wise, the learned, the beautiful, the accomplished and honorable of the land, to cheer your first entrance on the great theatre of human life, armed, not indeed with the "*scutum frameaque*," after the manner of the rude chivalry of the ancient German, or the sword and buckler of the warlike Scandinavian, nor clad with the "*toga virilis*" of the idolatrous Roman; but defended with the unstained armour of an intellectual panoply, and clothed in the unspotted robes of scientific truth, whitened and purified by the mild influencees of the Christian age in which we live. To you, young gentlemen, it is the most important crisis in the eventful lives upon the duties of which you are about to engage. It is the shore which divides the land on which you have remained in easy security, under the safe and restraining protection of parents, guardians and instructors, from that perilous ocean of life, on whose tumultuous billows you are now to launch your untried barks, fraught with the dearest interests and highest hopes of human existence.

And we, gentlemen Alumini, have thrown aside, for a season, the grovelling concerns of worldly strife—desisted from the vain and exciting struggles of human ambition—and come up to this high festival, not merely to enjoy the pure and tranquil pleasures of a literary banquet, so exquisitely prepared by the masters of the feast; not merely to catch the subduing inspirations and dwell on the sweet mementos of the place; not only to establish the relations of youthful

friendship, to renew the vows that were made in our early devotions at the altars of literature, and to stimulate and encourage those who are to come after us, and are now being ushered through the ceremonies of this occasion, on the busy stage of life. These, agreeable, and laudable, and noble as they are, should not be the only incentives for our annual visitations to this venerable seat of learning. We have a higher motive. We have a sacred duty to perform. We have been voyagers, for greater or less periods, on this tempestuous ocean. We have been tossed on the swelling waves of its bosom—we have acquired some knowledge of its dangers, its Scyllas and Charybdis, its tempests and whirlpools. We have returned again to the haven whence, too, our barks were launched on its boundless surface. Combining the experience of the past with our knowledge of the present, we may claim to bestow some reflections on the future. Under such circumstances, it becomes our duty not only to form for ourselves new resolutions of perseverance in rectitude—to stimulate virtue and warn against vice; but also to point out to others, our successors, the paths of duty and of honour; to guard them against the temptations and allurements by which they are encompassed; and to supplicate them to be steadfast in the performance of the obligations to themselves, their country and their God, by which their own happiness and renown shall be secured—the nation's welfare established—and the only true purpose of human existence fulfilled in bliss throughout the countless ages of eternity.

Deeply impressed with a sense of this duty which we owe to *ourselves*, Gentlemen Alumni, and to *you*, Gentlemen of the Senior Class, and to those whom our cherished Alma Mater is annually sending forth to engage in the great business of life, in the further prosecution of the objects of this Address, I would submit, for your consideration, some reflections on the *influence and duties of educated men in the United States*: a subject, equally interesting to such of them as have past, as to those who are standing on the threshold of life.

If an earnest desire to yield to the unexpected request of

the Society, of which I have been made the organ in addressing you on the present occasion, has induced me to resist the sincere diffidence and unaffected reluctance I entertained in attempting to appear in a place that has been adorned by the graces of eloquence and the lessons of mature wisdom, then I may claim the indulgent favour of those of whom I am the undeserving instrument. And if an humble soldier in the cause of learning, untrained to literary exercise, has consented to stand upon the ground where giants in literature have stood before, with an anxious wish to add something to an entertainment which is interesting to all, and a mite of instruction that has been gathered in the brief intervals allowed from the constant occupation of more active pursuits which engross his time, then he who has been called to address them may reasonably ask the charitable indulgence of this enlightened audience, and hope to mitigate the rigour of their critical severity.

By *educated men*, we mean, not only those who devote their lives to the pursuits of literature, but all who have enjoyed and improved the opportunities of storing their minds with science and knowledge that may be employed in the practical concerns of life, and the advancement of the great interests of society—the learned of every profession, and the disciples of science, as well as the poet, the historian, the scholar and the philosopher. The influence of educated men, as thus understood, has been immense, in every nation, on all the multiplied interests of society. Luther and his associates accomplished the most important revolution ever effected by human agency. The eloquence of Burke saved his country from scenes of blood, rapine and massacre. The genius of Scott changed and controlled the taste of an age. The historic records of the world abound with examples to prove the efficacy of an influence which must be obvious to all—and too plain to need their illustration. The few exceptions that are furnished by the power of unassisted genius but serve to illustrate, not to weaken our position. And in regard to these, it may be remarked, that though denied the opportunities of public instruction, such persons have always

educated themselves by thorough application in private; and have always lamented the want of that early mental discipline which is found to be essential to draw out the energies of intellect to the full extent of its capacity. If the Demosthenes of America was indeed “forest born,” how much mightier would have been his influence, and more enduring his fame, had he been endowed with the cultivated gifts of the immortal Grecian Orator.

That “knowledge is power,” has acquired the force of an axiom. The efforts of intellectual power will manifest themselves in outward facts. Genius will mould the thoughts of others in the model itself has formed, and leave its impress on the character of the age. But its fruits are not all matured in one age. They are enjoyed by posterity. Thebes was laid in ashes, but Pindar lives: and the memory of Troy will be eternized in the immortality of Homer. The influence of knowledge is felt on the moral, social and political relations of men. It is the stay of virtue—it chastens the affections, and is the only safe basis of the best form of government the wit of man has ever devised. While, on the other hand, it may be instrumental in promoting vice—in arousing into action the worst passions of our nature, and in kindling the fires of destruction to the whole fabric of society. In a political aspect, its influence is boundless for good or for evil. The Revolution which desolated the fair fields of France—made her plains to overflow with rivers of blood—and converted into a demon of ruin the goddess of liberty, at whose shrine she professed to worship, was the result not merely of the perverted power of the ignorant and the vile. These were the instruments of superior minds—the poet, the orator, the divine. Those whose harps should have been tuned to melodies of sacred virtue—whose eloquent lips should have inculcated the lessons of true wisdom—the beacon-lights whose constant and pure radiance should have guided the vessel of State through the storms and whirlwinds which endangered the republic, became the baleful meteors whose lucid flashings but served to produce confusion and disorder, disease and death !

The influence of educated men is increased by the character of the times, in which it is our destiny to live. Great events are on the wing, casting their shadows before. Great events will bring out and require great talents to direct them. Civilization is yielding its precious fruits. The spirit of enquiry is abroad, and the march of mind is onward. Men thirst for knowledge. An unparalleled impetus is given to the means of its acquisition. New facilities are afforded for its communication, and new motives for its universal diffusion. Behold the stupendous triumphs of science and of art over the very elements of nature; the magical effects of steam and machinery, of which, extraordinary as they are on the destinies of man, it may be said now, as was said more than a quarter of a century since, that "they are perhaps only now beginning to be felt." Witness, too, the potent energies of the press, in a thousand forms, scattering, as with the hands of a divinity, over the whole surface of the earth, the seeds of knowledge, of learning and religion. The mysteries of science are not hid in the seclusion of the closet, nor erudition buried in oblivion except to the few. The facilities of mutual intercourse blend together the thoughts and the interests of society. Mind is brought into constant collision with mind. The leaven of its influence is penetrating the mass. It is no longer confined to the circles of privileged orders—no longer absorbed by the abstractions of the schools, or limited to the disquisitions of metaphysical inquiry. Her fetters have been broken, and knowledge walks abroad in her true dignity, upholding the banners of benevolence and philanthropy—asserting the dominion of man over nature—looking to the feelings, the hopes, the wants, the substantial benefit of mankind, and pointing out to all the only true roads to human happiness and fame. In this era, too, we stand on the accumulated wisdom of ages. The scholar steps forth into the arena of life with a mind stored with the riches of the past—and covered with an armour prepared by all ages. He may select, from the extensive magazine in which he stands, all the weapons and engines that may be necessary or useful in the vast field of his labours.

But, if this be a peculiar age, ours is a peculiar country. While all the causes to which we have alluded are combined here to lend power to human knowledge, and give influence to educated men, others are superadded, which contribute in the most eminent degree to increase that influence and enhance that power. They grow out of the nature of our institutions. The people are the rulers—"the first estate." Their sovereignty is the fundamental principle in theory and practice. It is the "law of laws." It is recognized by all our usages and proclaimed by our constitutions; and its consequences are disseminated and felt in all the affairs of society. Rejecting the despotic pretensions of the few, our system is based on the rightful authority of the many. Perfect freedom of thought and of action, unrestricted but by the conditions the people themselves have imposed, is enjoyed to its fullest extent. We are, too, a new people, not bound down by the opinions of the Old World. The dazzling fascinations of aristocracy have been blotted out. The multitude no longer gaze in fear and wonder on a lofty order of perpetual pretension and hereditary arrogance, treading the upper air—overshadowing the rights of the people—and leaving on the mass no impression of their foot-prints. The inequalities of the Baron and Serf communities of continental Europe are unknown among us. We need no longer look to the corrupt and exploded systems of the monarchical dynasties of the Old World, for imitation and example. The pageantry of conventional pomp and princely pride has vanished. The horizon is cleared; and men stand forth in the only true dignity of human nature, blessed with no wealth that is not the reward of that honest labour which is the inheritance of man—and signalized by no distinction which genius, and worth, and virtue do not bestow. Equality is the great feature of our social and political theory; not that absolute equality which confines to the same level the diversified gifts of men—annihilates the chances of time and fate—and blends into one mass of assimilation all the various conditions which are inevitable in every state of nature and structure of society; but that glorious equality of privilege

and of right, which freely opens to all who may desire to enter the ways of honour, fortune, place and power; that unyielding equality which allows the same right, and subjects to the same law, the President of a great nation and the humble tenant of a cottage.

This broad basis on which we have built, as upon a rock, the foundations of our system, is not only endeared to us by the beneficent results of our own experience, but comes recommended by the sanctions of the highest authority, human and divine. It was taught by the Apostles and their Divine Master. It was the day-star that pioneered the revival of learning and civilization in Europe. The final triumph of the Reformation gave it a palpable and living existence. The Magna Charta of our independence proclaimed it to the world as a self-evident truth. And the principle was established in the plenitude of its power, as a fact and a practice, by the ever-memorable achievement of the American Revolution. If the seed which was sown has been of slow growth, the tree of liberty in its maturity has afforded the most ample foliage for the protection of all. May we cherish the fond hope that its boughs shall overspread the earth, and its rich fruit refresh all nations!

How great must be the influence, and how bright the anticipations, of the educated man, under such a system of free institutions! A system which ensures and protects the exertion of every faculty, and under the impulses of which he may dare do any thing, and dare hope any thing that may become a patriot and a scholar!

But, the educated man is still furnished with another lever, under our form of government, which he may wield for good or for evil on the destiny of the country. Public opinion is that lever—the opinion of numbers—the declared sense of the majority. Whether it be a tyrant, as charged by one of the most philosophic of foreign writers on the customs and institutions of America, it is not to our purpose to discuss—we speak of it as a fact. It is of the basis of our system—the *sine qua non* of republican government. It is the arbiter of sentiment and of action. Its umpirage is decisive

on the morals—the habits—the literature of the nation. It is the mirror which reflects the national character of the people. In politics, as expressive of the general will of the people, through the forms they may establish or annul, it is the supreme law—the Mount Sinai of our country. It is the utterance of that sovereignty whose determination, however sudden, and whose edict, however harsh, when clearly pronounced, are obligatory upon all, and exact immediate and unqualified submission from all who remain in the pale of its authority. The civil constitutions we have erected are but modes of expression of the popular will, which circumscribes and directs, by the established forms it has assumed, all the functions of government. The multiplied power of the press—an almost perfect community of language—our ready facilities of intercourse—the investigating and excitable spirit of our people—and the abiding interest they naturally feel in the welfare of a nation that “governs itself for itself”—give to public opinion a rapidity of manifestation unexampled in the history of the world. The shock that affects the extremity, electrifies every part of the body politic. The deep thought or bold truth that breaks the centre of the circle, is borne with the resistless current of a tide to every portion of the circumference.

But, this public opinion is not an automaton; nor can it create itself. The means that produce and controul it, will, under proper influences, necessarily be, to a very great extent, in the hands of the educated men of our country. Genius and talent will create, as well as direct, the atmosphere in which they live. The positions which educated men must occupy in a community so favourable to the promotion of knowledge, and the pursuit of the learned professions, which are filled from their ranks, cannot fail to invest them with a commanding influence. If this be true of all the professions, it is more especially so of the profession of the law. The members of this profession acquire, by daily and practical observation, an intimate acquaintance with the individual and social relations and interests of men, in every condition of life—their motives of action and the objects of their pursuit.

The study of the law necessarily involves a knowledge of our constitutions and forms of government; and when pursued with a proper and congenial spirit, is eminently calculated to enlarge, elevate and liberalize our social views. Every rational system of law being favourable to all ideas of justice and propriety, the members of this profession have always been first to apply rational principles to forms of civil government. And, as they have been led to study the rights of individuals, and apply to them doctrines of equity, they have glided most naturally to a consideration of the rights of communities and the proper adjustment of political power. Hence, while they have ever stood in the front rank of the advocates of public liberty, they have always been the friends of public order. The whole history of our government, from its earliest organization, abounds with examples of their influence—their labours—their sacrifices—their devotion to the best interests of their country.

I am aware that an unjust prejudice against this profession is fostered from interested motives, by a few—and entertained through the ignorance of many. But, certainly, before this enlightened audience it cannot be required to defend a science which, in the language of its great teacher, “employs in its theory the noblest faculties of the soul, and exerts in its practice the cardinal virtues of the heart”—or to vindicate a profession that has been adorned by the genius, and illustrated by the virtues, of a Hale—a Mansfield—a Marshall—and a splendid galaxy of others, who have illumined with vestal fire the temples of justice, and ever stood faithful sentinels on the watch-towers of liberty.

Such, then, gentlemen, is the age, and such the country, in which you are called to act your respective parts in the great drama of life; a drama, too, in which *real action*, and not mere display, or the dreams of a barren philosophy, is required by the spirit of the country and the age. The mighty influence you do or can exert, whether individually or collectively, whether by precept or example, involves the most serious responsibilities. It is the *talent* committed to your keeping, not indeed to be hid in the earth, nor even to be re-

terned with usury, but to be accounted for with a profit of an hundred fold. It is a responsibility of the deepest moment to ourselves—to our country and posterity. What, then, are the duties, by the performance of which this solemn obligation is to be discharged? To us all, and to you especially, young gentlemen, whom the exercises of another day will deprive of the advantages, as well as free from the restraints, of this institution, this is an inquiry of the most lasting importance. The limits of this Address will not permit more than an allusion to some of the prominent duties of educated men in our country. More mature reflection will serve to impress the hints that are now thrown out, as well as to suggest others deserving your consideration.

The great object of education being to fit us for the exigencies of life, it must be based on a system which, under the prudent guidance of the best instruction, shall most successfully evolve the mental, social, and moral qualities of our natures; which, while it disciplines the mind to habits of study and speculation, shall, at the same time, be best calculated to render it practically useful; a system which, in the language of a profound writer, "shall combine theoretical knowledge with practical judgment, and unite refinement of taste with energy of character." Such a system, we have reason to believe, is satisfactorily taught in the course at this University. But, you should ever remember, that to be graduated is one thing—to be educated is another; that here you have acquired but the rudiments of knowledge, and laid the foundation on which the superstructure of learning and utility is afterwards to be reared. When brought into contact with the world, the habits of mental and moral discipline to which you have here been accustomed, are to be constantly cultivated and kept in lively exercise. This duty is indispensable to the formation of a just character for yourselves—to render you either useful and efficient, or distinguished in life—to promote and dignify the cause of education itself—to advance that grade of elevated scholarship of which there are as yet so few examples in our country—to ensure success and lend grace to the efforts of talent, in professional and

public employment—and to repress the vanity of that self-conceited learning which is both contemptible in itself and fatal to further progress in improvement. It is essential, also, to your own happiness. Knowledge is desirable for its own sake. Should you be unable to withstand the rude prejudices that may encounter your path—to overcome the rooted hostilities of the world—and to ward off the envy and detraction which the glory of genius itself may create, remember still that knowledge is not without its own reward. If it be your lot to sink beneath the waves of fortune, rather than swim smoothly on her placid currents, you will still have the felicity to feel that you can retire to the solitude of the scholar, and feast upon the pure and enduring riches of a treasure, which, if the world cannot give, it can neither take away. Let it not be said, that the emergencies of life will leave no time for literary pursuits, or the attainment of literary excellence. The allegation is answered by the whole history of science and of letters. Franklin became the exemplar of the wisdom of his age, amid the drudgery of unavoidable labour and the anxieties of official station. The constant discharge of public employment, preying on the infirmities of an enfeebled constitution, left time to Sir William Jones to become the most accomplished scholar of his day. And the most imperishable productions of the most eloquent of the Romans, were the fruits of his leisure from the urgent duties of life.

The great cause of popular education, with the spirit of which our people are beginning to be thoroughly imbued, will, in an especial manner, deserve and demand the support and encouragement of the educated men in America. Among the many appellations by which this era has been characterized, it has been called the “age of education.” It will be your duty to give new impulse and increased energy to the benign spirit by which it is distinguished; to extend to all, the blessings which you so highly prize. Let public education be as common as republican principles, and let knowledge reach every home, that men may be wiser—better and happier. If there be one truth better established than

another by the experience of Mankind, it is, that republican liberty cannot be maintained by an ignorant and vicious community. And if the triteness of the truism that "morality and intelligence are the only sure basis of our government," has not effaced its deep importance from your minds, surely the spirit of patriotism cannot be indifferent to the successful progress of a cause which is identified with the existence of liberty itself. The imperious necessity of a duty so palpable in itself, cannot require, with educated men, the power of an argument to enforce it—or the language of entreaty to secure its faithful observance.

The literature of America is entirely dependent on her educated men. They must originate, controul and give it character. That we have no literature, is often contemptuously charged upon us by other nations: that we have attained as a people no commanding excellence in this department, must be admitted by ourselves. Though stars of great brilliancy have occasionally appeared in our sky, yet few, if any, have become so fixed in the firmament as certainly to attract the admiration of all future ages. But we are not to be reproached for neglect of the past. If we have filled no niche in the temple of literature, it is because her avenues have been closed by the urgent necessities of a new social condition. If we have heretofore had no literary class, it is because the genius and talent of the country have been drawn by the exigencies of our situation into other and more tempting channels. It is true, that with the manners and civilization of the mother country, our stern and adventurous forefathers brought to the new world something of the literature of the old: that they possessed an intellectual vigour, and a degree of intelligence eminently calculated to encounter the dangers of a foreign shore, and to erect a home for the peaceful enjoyment of that individual prosperity and religious freedom of which they were deprived by the oppressions of the father-land. If the wish of the philosopher, "that all record of past events had been blotted out," could have been gratified, still the primitive emigrants would have formed a government marked by the wisdom of being adapted to a high

state of social condition. But, the flowers of literature had no attraction for them. Having borne on their shoulders the mantles of Hampden and Sydney, they had but little taste or occasion for the beauties of Addison and Temple. Colonial dependence neither excited the ambition nor created the necessity of competing, by original production, against the superior advantages of their more favoured brethren. The independence of America, while it removed these obstacles, opened new difficulties scarcely less formidable to the success of a national literature. The fields of adventure, of enterprise and of polities, invited and engrossed the labours of all. Our National and State Constitutions were to be established—the experiment of self-government to be essayed—national prosperity to be secured—commerce to be prosecuted—foreign enemies to be met—our resources to be developed—the unexplored wilderness to be felled and appropriated—our farms to be cultivated—our daily bread to be earned—the professions to be filled—and the means of acquiring individual wealth to be devised and pursued. All these objects we have accomplished—and effected, too, in a manner that has commanded the respect and won the admiration of the world. Is it strange, then, that amidst the constant demands for the business of the moment, we have had no leisure for distinction in literature? No, gentlemen, we have achieved glory enough in the short space of half a century, to wipe out the stigma of not being a literary people. But the times are changed. We have become a *reading* and a *thinking* people. While profound learning has either remained stationary or diminished, general knowledge has increased. Its rudiments are more widely disseminated than in any other country of similar extent. The public press, much as its power has been abused, has an influence unequalled in any other nation. It will be the duty of educated men to chasten and refine the national taste; to elevate, among all classes, the standard by which the popular mind is to be judged. If our literature heretofore may be compared to the infancy of man, for its love of imitation—its wayward curiosity—its restless and unwearied activity—its playful

ness of fancy—its fondness for easy reading and the toys of learning, it should now assume the manly—the grave—the solid, energetic character of manhood, suited to the nature of our republican institutions. It will be your duty to purify the press of its corruptions—its gross scurrility—its violent defamation—as humiliating to the patriot as they are injurious to public morals. It will be your duty to strip false eloquence of its unmeaning bombast—its multiplicity of words without ideas—and of its hollow pretensions. And ever remember, that to be truly eloquent with the tongue or the pen; to give power to truth, and persuade men to its adoption; to disarm vice; to invigorate public virtue, and confirm private morals—your efforts must flow from a mind and a heart deeply imbued with the principle of the great master of eloquence, *ne futurum quidem oratorem, nisi bonum virum.* It is your duty to prepare yourselves for these high purposes, by the unremitting study of the best, purest and most chaste models, ancient and modern—by that thorough education which forms the habits of reflection through the close ordeal of scientific research—and that which subdues the feelings to the most rigid test of virtuous principle.

We would have the literature of America to be independent—to be American—American in its subjects, its sympathies and its tendencies; not that we would have genius to know a party, or literature establish a commonwealth; not that we should refuse to drink from the pure fountain of learning, wherever to be found, or embellish with her flowers and adorn with her gems, wherever to be gathered; or that we should abandon forever the fields that are enriched with the golden harvest of centuries. But, the labours of authorship should be directed and adapted to the situation—the wants—the feelings and spirit of our people and character of our institutions. Such works can only be produced by those who have lived among us, and been nurtured by our institutions. How much have we been misrepresented, and our national character degraded, by the writings of foreigners, whose opportunities for correct information were as limited as their national bigotry was inveterate. That the lite-

rature of America will ultimately attain the highest excellence, we have an abiding faith. What nobler materials can be found for the creations of fancy, or the philosophy of history? Where has the abundance of nature exhibited scenes richer in beauty and sublimity than in the forests of America? What history furnishes a theme more romantic in incident—more imposing in character—more philosophic in contemplation—more illustrative of prudence in victory, and fortitude in disaster—than the eventful epoch of the American Revolution? What theatre has displayed, in bolder relief, the rapidity of human success, and the grandeur of a self-governing people, than the triumphant career of American greatness? The native talent of our educated sons must polish these diamonds, and place them in the diadem that shall decorate the brow of American literature. If freedom be the first step to curiosity and knowledge, then we have surmounted the greatest difficulty; and the way is cleared for the onward march of the educated men of America to that proud eminence, whence the fame of her future Irvings in literature, shall shine as pure and as brilliant as that of her illustrious WASHINGTON in arms.

We have seen that the influence of educated men is not confined to the secluded walks of literature, or the quiet haunts of poetry, to the advancement of science, and promotion of good morals; but it is felt on all the public interests of society. Their ranks are thronged with the legislators and statesmen, whose wisdom is to enlighten the councils of the nation, and whose virtue is to secure her happiness and renown. While we would warn them to beware of the siren fascination of political life—its insatiable desires—its unceasing disquietudes—its airy hopes, that vanish in the grasp, as the vapours of a morning, yet we cannot suppose that educated men will be indifferent to the prosperity of a country whose glory and welfare are identified with their own—whose laws are of her own enactment—and whose institutions, the reward of the noblest valour and costliest sacrifice, are to be preserved and perpetuated by the vigilance of those for whose benefit they are established, and by whose apathy

they may be destroyed. If the voice of that country require their services, their duty will be to respond to the summons. It is their duty to prepare themselves to promote her true interests, by a deep and studious reflection on her history—her constitutions and laws—her resources—the wants—the habits—the spirit of her people—the dangers to which we are exposed, as well as the rich prospects that invite us.

I will not trespass on your patience, if I even had the power to delineate the high duties of those who aspire to preside at the helm of our destinies, or assist in their guidance. But, there are certain bold landmarks of duty, which should never be obliterated, and certain principles of conduct that only can lead us in safety.

Political favour is a reward from the people: the forms of the social compact is the work of the people. They are the emanations of that sovereignty whose voice is expressed by public opinion. To obtain this favour, or instil sound principles, the political aspirant and the advocate of truth, must appear, in some way or other, before that tribunal which is dreadful to many, but need be to none who have conscious integrity and rectitude of purpose.

Now, public opinion may be and often is wrong—and the wonder is, that it is not oftener in error, beset as it is by a thousand deceptions. When we believe it has erred, or is likely to err, we should be bold to say so. We should be the defenders of Truth—and speak without fear what we believe to be true. We should plant ourselves on the eternal principles of justice—of right and of wrong—uphold the truth, and defend the right. There must be no cringing, and flattery—no mean servility in our intercourse with the people. Be ambitious to deserve, rather than obtain success—to seek that popularity which follows—not that which is run after. Eschew, as you would the leprosy, the vile arts of the demagogue—the parasites and sycophants, who, to flatter a popular weakness, or pander to a popular prejudice, would undermine every established institution—and amidst the most solemn professions of patriotism, and with the most ardent praises of liberty, would fatten and swell a foul lust of pow-

er and of avarice—and enrich themselves with the spoils of a victory, drawn from the life-blood of the republic !

That the people intend the public good, there can be no question—that they may err, is equally true. The freedom of enquiry which we enjoy, so favourable to ultimate truth, is calculated from its very liberty to expose us to delusions.—As every virtue may become a vice, so every privilege we possess may be abused and perverted, and become a source of social evil. It will be your duty to guide public opinion aright—to make it wiser, milder and more charitable. You should direct its currents rather than swim upon its surface. Do not fawn as a courtier—but with frankness and honest courage tell the monarch of his foibles—his errors—his mischievous propensities. Never inculcate the doctrine that the “King can do no wrong.” And if he be a good and gracious sovereign, intending the public weal, as we believe our sovereign to be, though you may incur by your honesty his temporary displeasure, you shall finally be rewarded with the choicest gifts in his power. Or, if you fail in this hope, defeat will be success. You will have the enjoyment which flows from the conscientious discharge of a high duty: and posterity will write an epitaph that shall do justice to the memory of a virtue which could withstand popular vengeance for the good of your country. The fame of Aristides has survived the disgrace of ostracism, and been brightened by its infliction. The glory of Chatham has not been sullied because in Britain he was the friend of America.

Resist, too, the very first approaches of despotism in any shape and under any pretence. Let your motto be “*obsta principiis.*” The liberties of this country will not be destroyed by the strong arm of violence or undisguised usurpation, until the people shall have become gradually accustomed to submit to the more dangerous, because more insidious, advances of tyranny, under colour of authority and professions of patriotism. Corruption and public apathy will have prepared the victim, before the republic shall become a sacrifice to the ambition of a Cæsar. Do not pass unheeded the silent filterings of the stream through the embankments that

encircle and protect our liberties, lest the wide breach shall be made—and the resistless torrent shall sweep off in its fury the very fabric of our institutions. Remember, also, that licentiousness is the antipodes of liberty, of that well regulated liberty which consists in obedience to just and equal laws imposed by ourselves. Just restriction is of the essence of liberty. The first and vital element of the social compact is obedience to a government of some kind or other. Something must be permanent to give safety to the system: and the fundamental system, when established, is not to be questioned or subverted, but from a deep and clear assurance that it has failed to answer the purposes of the social union. Our allegiance is due to the constitution and the laws. Preserve inviolate that constitution, and maintain in its purity the supremacy of the law. And while you should guard with sleepless jealousy the undoubted rights of the States, hold on to our glorious Union as the anchor of our safety. Next to freedom itself, let the union of the States be the last plank to which we shall cling, in the shipwreck of our liberties.

Preserve untarnished the honour of your country. Let her bright escutcheon never be stained with the foul blot of Punic faith. Whether in treaty with the most potent power on earth, or the defenceless tribe of the wilderness, scorn with indignation the man who would pollute, with the infamy of national treachery, the proud flag of our Union. It has been as profoundly as beautifully said, that “private credit is wealth—public honour is security. The feather that adorns the royal bird, supports his flight; strip him of his plumage, and you fix him to the earth.”

Cherish an exalted public spirit and a true pride of country. Establish the feeling of a common country and a common interest. Be American in your sympathies—your hopes—your ambition. Let the name of an “American citizen” be the proudest title to which you can aspire. Be animated by the example, and emulate the virtues—the elevated integrity—the moderation—the prudence—the firmness and constancy—the vigilance and the disinterested public spirit, and warm and sincere patriotism of the illustrious

men who laid deep the foundations of our greatness: and, especially, of him, whom the very infant has learned to revere as the “father of his country”—of him who stands first and alone on the lists of fame—commanding the admiration of the wise of the earth, and the unbought applause of millions—of him, the streams of whose renown, springing from the pure fountains of private integrity and public virtue, will continue to flow on, widening and deepening, down the channels of time, till the whole earth shall be covered with the ocean of his glory !

And, above all, gentlemen, cherish and inculcate, as indispensable to the stability and perpetuity of our institutions, the civilizing, ennobling, restraining and purifying influences of Christianity. These only can avert from us the doom which has befallen all other Republics, that “were, but are not”—that have

“Gone, glimmering, through the dream of things that were—

“A school-boy’s tale—the wonder of an hour.”

The influences of the Christian philosophy are the golden threads which, though not interwoven with the texture of our government, beautify, strengthen and support the fabric. May they never be severed by the hands of fate! This is the rock of our trust—the cloud by day, and pillar of fire by night, that shall continue to guide us onward forever in the career of happiness and true glory.

In closing this Address, on a subject whose copious materials have, I know, been so imperfectly treated, we would entreat you, gentlemen, to carry with you, in every business of life, an abiding sense of the influence you possess, and the obligations it involves. Raise to yourselves an elevated standard of moral, social and political duty. Arm yourselves to the full fruition of the lofty privileges you enjoy. A glorious country calls you. A Constitution more perfect than the dreams of Plato—a Constitution in which every fancy of political perfection is a living reality, demands the devotion of your hearts and the exercise of your energies. Perform your duty to HIM, who will judge you by your

fruits; to your COUNTRY, that she may attain an eminence which shall defy the ravages of time; and to YOURSELVES, that when a future Tacitus comes to write the history of your influence, he may record of your lives, "Quidquid amavimus—quidquid mirati sumus, manet mansurum—que est in animis hominum—in eternitate temporum—fama rerum."

John H. Smith

John H. Smith

Anderson County
South Carolina



